

INFLUENCE OF COPING STYLE ON LIFE SATISFACTION AMONG VIETNAMESE UNDERGRADUATES OF PSYCHOLOGY, MEDIATED BY STRESS, ANXIETY, AND DEPRESSION

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Abstract: This study investigated (1) the direct influence of coping style on life satisfaction; (2) the indirect influences of coping style on life satisfaction, being mediated by depression, anxiety, and stress; and (3) gender differences in coping style, life satisfaction, depression, anxiety, and stress on a sample of 510 Vietnamese undergraduates of psychology in Ho Chi Minh city. Vietnamese-translated versions of the Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (CISS), Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS), Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) and a researcher-constructed demographic questionnaire were employed for data collection. Reliability test, the t-test, and multiple regression analysis were used in data analysis. Results revealed that problem-focused coping and avoidance-focused coping were positively related to life satisfaction while emotion-focused coping was found to be negatively correlated with life satisfaction. Furthermore, problem-focused coping was found to be negatively correlated with depression, anxiety, and stress, whereas emotion-focused coping was found to be positively correlated with the three emotive variables. Avoidance-focused coping was negatively correlated with depression. In terms of testing indirect relationship hypothesis, the regression analysis showed that there was an indirect influence of emotion-focused coping and avoidance-focused coping on Vietnamese psychology undergraduate students' life satisfaction, being mediated by their reported level of depression. Additionally, no significant gender differences were found in problem-focused coping, depression, anxiety, stress, and life satisfaction. In contrast, there were significant gender differences in emotion-focused coping and avoidance-focused coping such that Vietnamese female students of psychology tended to employ emotion-focused coping and avoidance-focused coping more than their male counterparts.

Keywords: Coping Styles, Life Satisfaction, Depression, Anxiety, Stress, Viet Nam, Psychology Students.

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Introduction

In Viet Nam, in the 1990s, a few organizations (e.g., social work centers, counseling centers, etc.) started to offer services such as psychosocial support, counseling, crisis intervention, hotline assistance, and hospital-based psychological services. These activities contributed towards shaping a new form of psychology and counseling profession in the country (Tran, 2009). To meet the needs of society and client about psychological services, some universities in different regions offered undergraduate program of psychology. The undergraduate students with specialization in counseling study counseling and clinical courses such as basic counseling techniques, psychopathology, psychotherapy, clinical psychology. Moreover, undergraduate students are recommended to take their internship at a suitable company, hospital, or counseling center. Thus, undergraduate students of psychology are expected to have acquired a good theoretical foundation of psychology as well as practical skills after graduation. However, Tran (2009) pointed out the quality of undergraduate programs in psychology has not matched the needs of clients and society mainly due to lack of supervision and qualified trainers, outdated textbooks and resources, and insufficient amount of time for training and instruction.

In spite of the fact that those undergraduates will become mental health professionals, their psychological distress (e.g. stress, anxiety, depression) hasn't been tackled properly as well as the shortage of support of psychology faculty staffs to those students. In particular, excessive workload is a major academic stressor for psychology students. Additionally, the academic development of psychologists as a complex process increases the level of perceived stress among psychology majors (Gallo-Belluzzo, Corbett, & Aiello-Vaisberg, 2013). Tyrrell (1992) conducted a study on 94 undergraduates of psychology in Dublin and reported that fear of falling behind with coursework, finding the motivation to study, time pressure, financial worries, and concern about academic ability are the most frequent contributors to student stress. By the same token, Cassaretto, Chau, Oblitas, and Valdés (2003) established that older psychology students experienced higher stress than younger ones due to issues regarding their future and well-being. In contrast with common expectation that psychology students can balance their life and the academic pressures due to their acquired knowledge of stress, a recent study by Rummell (2015) revealed that the rate of anxious and depressive symptoms among psychology students are higher than that of the general population and of medical students, with greater than 49% reported clinically significant anxiety symptoms and greater than 39% reported clinically significant depressive symptoms.

In terms of dealing with stressful life situations and academic works, psychology undergraduate students adopt various coping strategies such as problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and avoidance-focused coping. It had been demonstrated that both problem-oriented coping and emotion-oriented coping are effective in reducing the amount of stress among psychology students (Cassaretto et al., 2013). On the other hand, Bouteyre et al. (2007) reported that, among first year students of psychology, only problem-oriented coping is an effective adaptation strategy, especially among those who had left their hometown to study elsewhere.

Despite of richness in publication and literature in western context, there is a scarcity of research on these topics within the Viet Nam context. Nguyen and Nguyen

(2009) investigated the stress levels of 829 undergraduates of five northern universities in Viet Nam. The findings indicated that 2.02% of students experience stress levels above that of the general population. Furthermore, with regard to gender difference, it was found that female students experience more stress than their male counterparts. A number of published studies on depression and anxiety among Vietnamese undergraduates involved the participation of Vietnamese immigrant students in which researchers concentrated on how the acculturation process influences the level of depression. Lay and Nguyen (1998) found that more recent Vietnamese-Canadian immigrant students reported more outgroup hassles and higher levels of depression, compared to students who have resided in Canada for a longer period of time. With regard to life satisfaction, empirical findings revealed that campus environment correlates with students satisfaction (Duong, 2016). An earlier study by the same author found that teaching approach, curriculum engagement, and co-curriculum involvement in university experiences correlate positively with student satisfaction (Duong, 2015).

Although there are numerous studies about coping style, depression, anxiety, stress and life satisfaction, there is no research available which provides a clear link between those variables within Viet Nam context. In view of this knowledge gap, this researcher has attempted to examine the impact of coping styles on life satisfaction with mediators of depression, anxiety and stress among Vietnamese psychology undergraduates.

Objectives

The current study aims to examine the following:

1. The direct influence of coping style on the level of life satisfaction among undergraduate psychology students in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam.
2. The indirect influences of coping style on life satisfaction among undergraduate psychology students, being mediated by their levels of depression, anxiety, and stress.
3. Gender differences in coping style (problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and avoidance-focused coping), life satisfaction, depression, anxiety, and stress among undergraduate students of psychology in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam.

Literature Review

Coping generally refers to a cognitive and behavioral response to negative external events (Billings & Moos, 1981). Alternatively, it refers to a person's effort and capacity to deal with stressful environments and situations by adopting a variety of coping strategies or styles such as problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, or avoidance-focused coping (Lazarus & Lazarus, 2006). Nelson, Dell'Oliver, Koch, and Buckler (2001) found that psychology students tend to adopt positive coping strategies more than negative ones, and that those who utilize emotion-focused coping also tend to seek social support. Bouteyre et al. (2007) explained that adopting emotion-focused coping may increase symptoms of depression, which is a reason for

students to seek social support for more effective strategies to manage stress and reduce depression. In term of coping classification, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) broke down coping mechanisms into three categories: problem-focused coping style, emotion-focused coping style, and avoidance-focused coping style. Practically mirroring the latter statement, Endler and Parker (1994), a decade later, proposed that typical coping styles include task/problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidance-focused strategies.

Problem-focused coping refers to an effort to eliminate or decrease the source of stress (Lazarus & Lazarus, 2006). Smith and Renk (2007) considered problem-focused coping as an adaptive coping style. Accordingly, people who employ more problem-focused coping tend to adapt better to stressful situations and experience fewer psychological symptoms.

People who employ emotion-focused coping assume that they are less likely to succeed in dealing with stressful situations, thus, they try to deal with their own emotional distress (Lazarus & Lazarus, 2006). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) posited that emotion-focused coping may involve cognitive strategies for minimizing distress such as distancing, positive comparisons, reappraisal, and looking for positive meaning in negative events.

Avoidance of stressor effects is the goal in avoidant-focused coping style (Aycock, 2011). Parker and Endler (1992) argued that people who employ avoidance-focused coping strategies tend to handle stressful situations by seeking out others (social diversion) or engaging in substitute tasks (distraction). In other words, people using avoidance coping tend to distract themselves from stressful situations and avoid direct confrontation with stressors by applying denial and diversion tactics. Coping styles in this study such as problem-, emotion-, and avoidance-focused coping were measured by means of the *Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations* (CISS), developed by Norman S. Endler and James D. A. Parker in 1990.

Depression is a state of deep despondency marked by apathy, emotional negativity, and behavioral inhibition. A depressed mood is commonly experienced by most people; however, in the clinical context, depression refers to a condition comprising a mood disorder, psychomotor changes, somatic, and neurologic disturbances (Willner, 1985). University students may be particularly vulnerable to depression, with rates at around 14%, according to one study in Dublin, Ireland (Curran et al., 2009). Furthermore, the background rate among the general population is thought to be around 8 to 12%.

Anxiety is a complicated emotion which is blended by distress, sadness, anger, shame, guilt, and interest (Izard, 1971). According to Plotnik and Kouyoumdjian (2011), anxiety refers to “an unpleasant state that is associated with feelings of uneasiness, apprehension, and heightened physiological arousal such as increased heart rate and blood pressure” (p. 619). A recent study explored the connection between perfectionism and anxiety in university students. Results revealed a moderate positive correlation between anxiety and perfectionism, suggesting that anxious students tend to adopt the trait of perfectionism (Milena, 2015). Eisenberg et al. (2007) reported a positive relationship between self-deception and anxiety among 268 college students; more specifically, students with lower degree of self-deception experienced lower anxiety.

Stress, as it is currently used, was coined by Hans Selye in 1936, who initially defined it as a non-specific response of the body to any demand for change (Selye, 1956, 1976). It is the process by which a person perceives and responds to certain events called “stressors” that are appraised as either threatening or challenging. Many college students find the academic experience very stressful (Swick, 1987). Bataineh (2013) found that academic overload, course work, inadequate time to study, workload every semester, exams, low motivation, and high family expectations predict moderate stress among students. Three emotive variables of depression, anxiety and stress were measured in this study by means of the anxiety subscale of the *Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scales* (DASS-21), developed by Sydney H. Lovibond and Peter F. Lovibond in 1995.

Life satisfaction refers to how much a person positively evaluates the overall quality of his/her life (Veenhoven, 1996). A person’s quality of life will have an impact on his/her life satisfaction, where life satisfaction is defined as a cognitive evaluation by an individual of his/her life (Pavot et al., 1991). Socioeconomic status (SES) is positively correlated with life satisfaction among college students; in particular, lower SES students reported lower life satisfaction, compared to higher SES students (Ash & Huebner, 1998). In this study, life satisfaction was measured by means of the *Satisfaction With Life Scale* (SWLS), developed by Ed Diener, Robert A. Emmons, Randy J. Larsen, and Sharon Griffin in 1985.

A review of the literature revealed the links between coping styles, three emotive variables of depression, anxiety, stress, and life satisfaction. Mahmoud, Staten, Hall, and Lennie (2012) measured the effect of coping style, life satisfaction, and selected demographics of full-time undergraduate students’ stress, depression, and anxiety and found that maladaptive coping predicts anxiety while adaptive coping does not, and that reducing maladaptive coping behaviors may decrease anxiety. Gustems-Carnicer and Calderon (2013) reported that problem-focused coping is negatively correlated with depression and positively correlated with life satisfaction.

Conceptual Framework

Based on salient theoretical perspectives and findings of related studies, a conceptual framework was developed (Figure 1).

(See Figure 1 on the next page)

The following hypotheses were generated for testing:

- H1: Coping style has a direct influence on the level of life satisfaction among undergraduate students of psychology in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam such that (1) their employment of problem-focused coping style is associated with higher reported level of life satisfaction; and (2) their employment of emotion-focused coping and avoidance-focused coping style is associated with lower reported level of life satisfaction.
- H2: Coping style has an indirect influence on the level of life satisfaction among undergraduate students of psychology in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam, being mediated by their levels of depression, anxiety, and stress such that (1) their employment of problem-focused coping style is

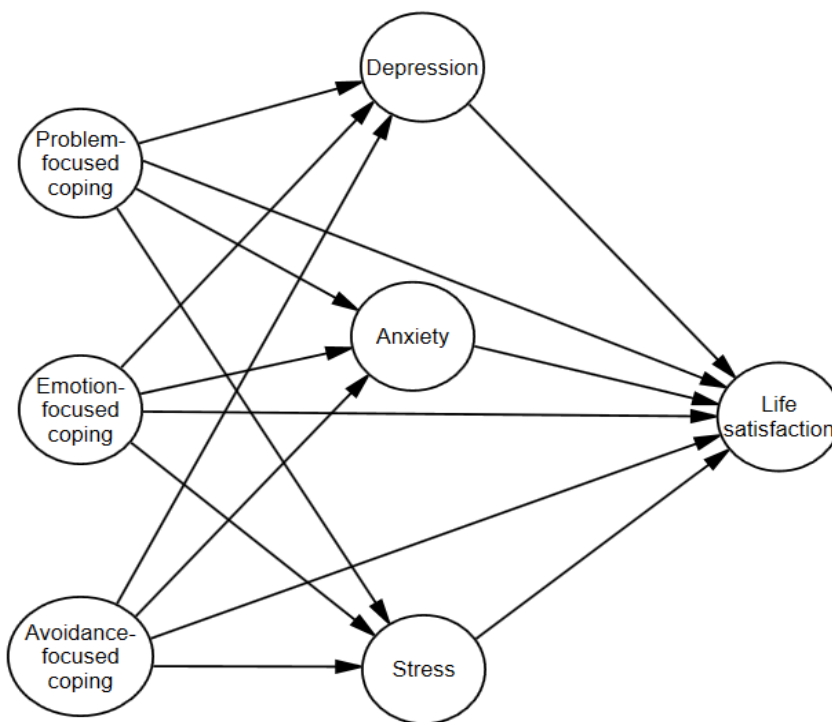


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of This Study

associated with lower levels of reported depression, anxiety, and stress and, subsequently, with higher reported level of life satisfaction; and (2) their employment of emotion-focused coping and avoidance-focused coping style is associated with higher levels of reported depression, anxiety, and stress and, subsequently, with lower reported level of life satisfaction.

H3: There are gender differences in coping style (problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and avoidance-focused coping), life satisfaction, depression, anxiety, and stress among undergraduate students of psychology in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam.

Method

This study is quantitative research which used descriptive and inferential statistical tools to analyze the obtained data. The data was acquired from 380 female and 130 male undergraduates from five different departments of psychology in Ho Chi Minh city. Convenient sampling was used as a sampling technique. The tool for collecting data was a test battery which consisted of four separate survey questionnaires in Vietnamese language. The research instruments consisted of the following measures: (1) demographic questionnaire – to find out the participant's gender, type of student, accommodation status, year level, GPA, and age; (2) Coping Inventory for Stressful

Situations (CISS) – to measure the employment of coping style; (3) The 21-item Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scales (DASS-21) – to measure the level of depression, anxiety, and stress; (4) The 5-item Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) – to measure the level of life satisfaction. As the aforementioned surveys were originally developed in English, the scales had to be translated into Vietnamese by a bilingual translator, for use with Vietnamese participants. Back translation was subsequently performed by another translator. In case of any difference, a third expert was consulted. When administering the questionnaires, the full name of the scales was removed to avoid socially desirable answers.

Findings

The analyses conducted and the results obtained are presented in the following sequence:

1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

The sample consisted of 510 participants of whom 130 (25.5%) were males and 380 (74.5%) were females. Their ages ranged from 18 to 26 years, with a mean age of 20.01 years (median=20 years). Their GPA scores ranged from 4.75 (out of 10) to 9.03 with a mean GPA score of 7.17 (median=7.15). In terms of type of student, 74.9% (n=382) of the participants were full-time students and 25.1% (n=128) of the participants were part-time students. In terms of year level, 26.7% (n=136) of the participants were first year students, 27.1% (n=138) of the participants were second year students, 28.2% (n=144) of the participants were third year students, and 18% (n=92) of the participants were fourth year students. In terms of accommodation status, 45.7% (n=233) of the participants were living with family, 48.6% (n=248) of the participants were living in a dorm or an apartment, and 5.5% (n=28) of the participants were living in other places.

2. Reliability Analysis of the Scales Employed

The purpose of the reliability analysis was to maximize the internal consistency of the seven measures by identifying those items that are internally consistent (i.e., reliable), and to discard those items that are not. The criteria employed for retaining items are (1) any item with 'Corrected Item-Total Correlation' (I-T) $>.33$ will be retained (.33² represents approximately 10% of the variance of the total scale accounted for), and (2) deletion of an item will not lower the scale's Cronbach's alpha. a number of the items representing the factors of problem-focused coping and avoidance-focused coping have low corrected item-total correlations ($<.33$). These items were deleted prior to the computation of the factors. Thus, the factor of 'problem-focused coping' is represented by 15 items, the factor of 'emotion-focused coping' is represented by 12 items, the factor of 'avoidance-focused coping' is represented by 13 items, the factor of 'depression' is represented by 7 items, the factor of 'anxiety' is represented by 7 items, the factor of 'stress' is represented by 7 items, and the factor of 'life satisfaction' is represented by 5 items. The computed Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all seven scales were adequate and ranged from .74 to .84 (problem-focused coping .83, emotion-focused coping .84, avoidance-focused coping .79, depression .84, anxiety .75, stress .80, life satisfaction .74).

3. Means and Standard Deviations for the Main Variables

The following Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations for the seven computed factors for male and female participants separately and for the entire sample.

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations for the Computed Factors of Problem-Focused Coping, Emotion-Focused Coping, Avoidance-Focused Coping, Depression, Anxiety, Stress, and Life Satisfaction

	Mean	S.D.	Midpoint
• Problem-focused coping	3.40	.50	3.00
• Emotion-focused coping	2.89	.64	3.00
• Avoidance-focused coping	3.17	.57	3.00
• Depression	.97	.62	1.50
• Anxiety	.96	.55	1.50
• Stress	1.14	.58	1.50
• Life satisfaction	4.31	1.16	4.00

As can be seen from Table 1, the factor of ‘problem-focused coping’ and ‘avoidance-focused coping’ was rated above the mid-point (3) on its scale, the factor of ‘emotion-focused coping’ was rated below the mid-point on its scale. Thus, overall, the participants were more likely to employ problem-focused coping and, to a lesser degree, avoidance-focused coping and, least of all, emotion-focused coping when dealing with stressful situations during their studies. The participants also rated the DASS-21 factors of ‘depression’, ‘anxiety’, and ‘stress’ below the mid-point (1.5) on their respective scales. Thus, the participants reported generally low levels of depression, anxiety, and stress experienced in their study. In terms of their life satisfaction, the participants rated their life satisfaction above the mid-point (4) on the scale. Thus, the respondents were generally satisfied with their lives.

4. T-test for Gender Difference

The following Table 2 presents the significance of Levene’s test and independent t-test for the seven computed factors with gender:

Table 2: Significance of Means and Independent T-test for the Computed Factors of Problem-Focused Coping, Emotion-Focused Coping, Avoidance-Focused Coping, Depression, Anxiety, Stress, and Life Satisfaction with Gender

	Mean		T-test	
	Male	Female	t	Sig (2-tailed)
Problem-focused coping	3.400	3.400	.1270	.899
Emotion-focused coping	2.712	2.950	-3.4590	.001
Avoidance-focused coping	3.037	3.218	-3.0670	.002
Depression	.940	.975	-.5590	.576
Anxiety	.925	.965	-.6800	.497
Stress	1.075	1.158	-.1404	.161
Life satisfaction	4.300	4.320	-.2080	.835

Since the assumption of homogeneity of variance has not been violated in variables of emotion-focused coping ($F = .102$, $\text{sig} = .750$), avoidance-focused coping ($F = .029$, $\text{sig} = .864$), depression ($F = .147$, $\text{sig} = .702$), stress ($F = 3.504$, $\text{sig} = .062$), life satisfaction ($F = .018$, $\text{sig} = .893$), the “equal variances assumed” t test statistic was used for evaluating the null hypothesis of equality of means. However, the assumption that the population variances are equal is rejected in variables of problem-focused coping ($F = 4.049$, $\text{sig} = .045$) and anxiety ($F = 4.470$, $\text{sig} = .035$); thus, the “equal variances not assumed” t test statistic was used.

Results revealed that there were no significant gender differences in problem-focused coping ($t = .127$, $\text{sig} = .899$), depression ($t = -.559$, $\text{sig} = .576$), anxiety ($t = -.680$, $\text{sig} = .497$), stress ($t = -1.404$, $\text{sig} = .161$), and life satisfaction ($t = -.208$, $\text{sig} = .835$) among Vietnamese undergraduate students of psychology. On the other hand, significant gender difference was found in emotion-focused coping ($t = -3.459$, $\text{sig} = .001$) such that Vietnamese female students of psychology tended to employ emotion-focused coping more than their male counterparts (mean difference = $-.233$). Likewise, there was significant gender difference in avoidance-focused coping ($t = -3.067$, $\text{sig} = .002$) such that Vietnamese female students of psychology tended to employ avoidance-focused coping more than their male counterparts (mean difference = $-.180$).

Path Analysis

In order to test the hypothesized direct and indirect relationships represented by the path model depicted in Figure 1, path analysis via regression analysis was conducted. The analysis involved (1) regressing the dependent variable of life satisfaction on the predictor variables of problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, avoidance-focused coping, depression, anxiety, and stress; and (2) regressing the mediator variables of depression, anxiety, and stress on the predictor variables of problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and avoidance-focused coping. The results of this path analysis are presented in Figure 2.

(See Figure 2 on the next page)

The results showed that for the Vietnamese undergraduate students of psychology, their employment of problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and avoidance-focused coping styles is directly and significantly related to their reported level of life satisfaction. Thus, the more the Vietnamese psychology students employed problem-focused coping to deal with stressful situations, the higher their reported level of life satisfaction ($\text{Beta} = .16$); the more they employed emotion-focused coping to deal with stressful situations, the lower their reported level of life satisfaction ($\text{Beta} = -.36$); and the more they employed avoidance-focused coping to deal with stressful situations, the higher their reported level of life satisfaction ($\text{Beta} = 1.4$).

Problem-focused coping was also found to be directly and significantly related to the three emotive variables of depression, anxiety, and stress. Thus, the more the Vietnamese undergraduate students of psychology employed problem-focused coping to deal with stressful situations, the lower their reported level of depression

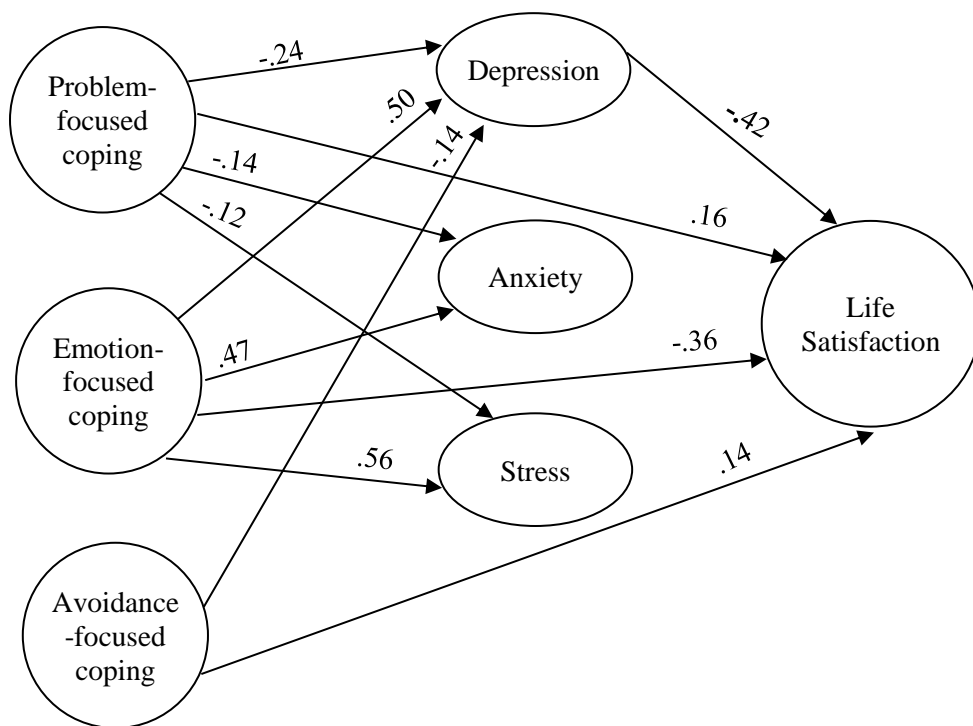


Figure 2: Path Model of Vietnamese Psychology Undergraduate Students' Life Satisfaction as A Function of the Direct and Indirect Influences of Their Coping Styles, Being Mediated by Their Levels of Depression, Anxiety, and Stress

(Beta = $-.24$), anxiety (Beta = $-.14$), and stress (Beta = $-.12$). Emotion-focused coping was also found to be directly and significantly related to the three motive variables of depression, anxiety, and stress. Thus, the more the Vietnamese undergraduate students of psychology employed emotion-focused coping to deal with stressful situations, the higher their reported level of depression (Beta = $.50$), anxiety (Beta = $.47$), and stress (Beta = $.56$). Avoidance-focused coping was also found to be directly and significantly related to the motive variable of depression such that the more these students employed avoidance-focused coping to deal with stressful situations, the lower their reported level of depression (Beta = $-.14$).

The reported level of depression of Vietnamese undergraduate students of psychology was found to be directly and significantly related to their reported level of life satisfaction. Thus, the higher their reported level of depression, the lower their reported level of life satisfaction (Beta = $-.42$). In term of testing indirect relationship hypothesis, a model of emotion-focused coping (Beta = $-.218$), avoidance-focused coping (Beta = $.123$), depression (Beta = $-.304$) of Vietnamese undergraduate students of psychology was found to be directly and significantly related to their reported level of life satisfaction. In a conclusion, there is an indirect influence of emotion-focused coping and voidance-focused coping on Vietnamese psychology

undergraduate students' life satisfaction, being mediated by their reported level of depression.

Discussion

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations in the present study that should be noted. First, the path model hypothesized relationships between the study's exogenous, mediator, and criterion variables. Path analytic results can only be interpreted in terms of relationships and not in terms of causality. Second, the psychosocial variables investigated in this study, although widely used in Western nations, are not well-researched within the Vietnam context. Third, most of the literature underpinning the present study are Western-based and may not be relevant or pertinent to the Vietnamese population. Fourth, this study involved Vietnamese psychology undergraduate students from five psychology faculties in Ho Chi Minh City; therefore, the findings may be specific only to this group of students. Given the population targeted for the present study and the convenience sampling technique employed, the obtained findings may have limited external validity. Finally, the findings of the current study should be interpreted with some caution because of some intervening or limiting factors beyond the scope of this study.

Implications

The current findings have several implications. For example, this study suggests that, for Vietnamese students of psychology, problem-focused coping is the most effective strategy in dealing with stressful situations, including academic demands, leading to higher life satisfaction and lower levels of depression, anxiety, and stress. In response to this implication, deans and other administrators of Vietnamese faculties of psychology are encouraged to offer counseling services, seminar-workshops, or other relevant mental health services for infusion in the mainstream curriculum of psychology students to help them understand and manage stress. These students will, in the near future, become mental health professionals themselves; thus, giving them the right preparation in terms of knowledge and skills in stress management would be invaluable for future practice, higher life satisfaction, decreased levels of depression, anxiety, and stress, improvement in their academic performance and, more importantly, for personal and professional growth. For college counselors, it is anticipated that the current findings would raise their awareness of the impact of coping style on students' mental health. It would be ideal as well as practical for these counselors to help integrate the matter of coping strategies into students' working plan in order to help these students improve their academic performance and overall quality of life. Additionally, another important implication of the current findings is that Vietnamese higher education policy-makers should review, evaluate, and implement changes in the tertiary curriculum, with a view to providing more support and resources to college students aimed at reducing academic overload and promoting mental health.

Recommendations and Avenues for Future Research

The current findings suggest a number of avenues worth investigating in future research. First, the study can be replicated and the hypothesized path model tested with a larger sample that includes psychology undergraduate students from different regions in Viet Nam. Second, future researchers should consider employing a mixed-design that includes the use of qualitative methodology. Third, as mentioned in the 'Limitations' section, much of the literature employed in the present study to underpin the study's conceptual framework is Western-based. Hence, it would be useful for researchers to conduct more studies on non-Western samples in order to build up a knowledge base that focuses on the psychosocial variables of interest from the Asian perspective which has the added advantage of forcing future researchers to re-evaluate the cross-cultural validity of the Western-based instruments used in psychological research. Lastly, when participating in research and, in particular, when filling in questionnaires, there is the tendency to want to please the researcher. As such, there is the motivation to provide socially desirable responses that may not truly reflect the respondents' views or opinions. That is, respondents exposed to psychological principles may deliberately skew their responses (e.g., reporting lower/higher agreement with the scale items) in order to appear more socially acceptable to the researcher. Controlling for socially desirable responses is extremely difficult, if not impossible. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the guarantee of anonymity and the confidentiality of the respondents' responses would have gone some way in ameliorating this problem.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the more the Vietnamese psychology students employ problem-focused coping and avoidance-focused coping in dealing with stressful situations, the higher is their level of life satisfaction. On the other hand, the more the students employ emotion-focused coping, the lesser is their level of life satisfaction. It can also be concluded that the more the students employ problem-focused coping, the lesser they experience depression, anxiety, and stress. Furthermore, students who tend to employ avoidance-focused coping in managing stress experience lower degree of depression, and that those who tend to employ emotion-focused coping reportedly experience higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress. In terms of gender difference, it can be concluded that Vietnamese female psychology students tend to adopt emotion-focused coping and avoidance-focused coping more than their male counterparts. On the whole, it can be said that the current study successfully met its main objectives and that its contribution to the literature with regard to the interrelationships among the key variables within the Vietnamese context cannot be overemphasized.

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